Oaths

From. "Pennsylvania German Pioneers" Vol. I, H.

A vivid account of the arrival of these passenger ships in the harbor of Philadelphia, is given by the Rev. Henry M. Muehlenberg, in a report, which he sent to Halle in the year 1769. He writes:[29]

"After much delay one ship after another arrives in the harbor of Philadelphia, when the rough and severe winter is before the door. One or more merchants receive the lists of the freights and the agreement which the emigrants have signed with their own hand in Holland, together with the bills for their travel down the Rhine and the advances of the 'newlanders' for provisions, which they received on the ships on account. Formerly the freight for a single person was six to ten louis d'ors, but now it amounts to fourteen to seventeen louis d'ors.[30] Before the ship is allowed to cast anchor at the harbor front, the passengers are all examined, according to the law in force, by a physician, as to whether any contagious disease exists among them. Then the new arrivals are led in procession to the City Hall and there they must render the oath of allegiance to the king of Great Britain. After that they are brought back to the ship. Then announcements are printed in the newspapers, stating how many of the new arrivals are to be sold. Those who have money are released. Whoever has well-to-do friends seeks a loan from them to pay the passage, but there are only a few who succeed. The ship becomes the market-place. The buyers make their choice among the arrivals and bargain with them for a certain number of years and days. They then take them to the merchant, pay their passage and their other debts and receive from the government authorities a written document, which makes the newcomers their property for a definite period."

When we examine the dates of arrival of the ships, we note that the large majority of them arrived in the fall. In August twenty-nine, in September one hundred and thirty-eight, in October eighty-six, in November thirty-three and in December fourteen. In none of the other months did the totals exceed five ships for each month. Muehlenberg was, therefore, entirely correct when he stated that most of the ships reached

[29] *Hallesche Nachrichten*, new ed., Vol. II, pp. 460–461.

[30] The equivalent of the louis d'or is about $4.50, though its purchasing power at that time was much greater.

References:

1. "White Servitude in Pennsylvania" by Cheesman Herrick. Philadelphia, J. J. McVey (1926).
2. "The Redemptioners" by F. R. Diffenderffer in "The Pennsylvania German Society" Vol. X (1900).
3. The chapter, "The Broad Atlantic" in "The Pennsylvania Dutch" by Frederic Klees. New York, Macmillan Co. (1950).
4. "The Free Man" by Conrad Richter. New York, Alfred A. Knopf (1944) The characters in this short novel are fictional, but their experiences were typical of those of redemptioners.